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Letter dated 28 November 2007 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I wish to refer to an exchange of letters between my predecessor and the President of the Security Council in November 2001 (S/2001/1128 and S/2001/1129) relating to the establishment of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA). I also wish to refer to an exchange of letters between my predecessor and the President of the Security Council in October 2004 (S/2004/797 and S/2004/858) relating to the extension of the mandate of UNOWA for three years, from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2007, subject to a mid-term review. In that connection, it would be recalled that on 18 May 2007, I transmitted to the Council a mid-term review of the activities and performance of UNOWA prepared by an independent consultant from September 2006 to November 2006 (S/2007/294, annex).

The importance of the work of UNOWA has been acknowledged on several occasions, including in the Security Council presidential statement adopted on 25 February 2005 (S/PRST/2005/9), following the Council's debate on the progress report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional problems in West Africa (S/2005/86). The Council noted with appreciation the enhanced cooperation among the various United Nations political and peacekeeping missions in the subregion, and encouraged UNOWA to promote an integrated and joint subregional approach to conflict prevention. Furthermore, in its presidential statement of 9 August 2006 (S/PRST/2006/38), the Council emphasized the regional dimension of peace and security in West Africa, and encouraged the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the United Nations missions in the region to continue their efforts in coordinating United Nations activities to ensure their improved cohesion and maximum efficiency. On 13 March 2007, I submitted to the Security Council, at its request, a report on cross-border issues in West Africa (S/2007/143), with recommendations for enhancing United Nations inter-institutional cooperation in the region on these issues.

UNOWA has continued to increase awareness of and to facilitate concerted and integrated action on key subregional challenges, which the Security Council and the Secretariat consider to be among the root causes of instability in West Africa. The Office has helped formulate recommendations and strategies on how best to address those issues, notably through national and cross-border collaboration among United Nations entities in the subregion, including United Nations political and peacekeeping missions as well as governmental and non-governmental actors.

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Concerning collaboration among United Nations peace missions in the subregion, as recommended by the Security Council in its presidential statement of 25 May 2004 (S/PRST/2004/17) and underscored in my predecessor's report of 2 March 2005 on inter-mission cooperation (S/2005/135), my Special Representative for West Africa continues to convene quarterly meetings between the heads of the various political and peacekeeping missions in West Africa. Those meetings have been instrumental for the sharing of information and perspectives on political developments in the respective mission areas and their regional impact on peace, security and stability. In addition, UNOWA continues to facilitate inter-mission cooperation at the military level through regular meetings of United Nations force commanders and military advisers, as well as at the expert level regular meetings of officers in charge of human rights, humanitarian, gender issues and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Furthermore, UNOWA seeks to enhance synergy and complementarity with United Nations missions in the sharing of assets, notably with a view to maximizing the use of United Nations resources. In this context, the Office shares air assets with other United Nations operations and agencies in the subregion and collaborates with United Nations specialized agencies on integrated cross-border strategies and joint activities, often with the involvement of civil society organizations, as appropriate.

During its current mandate, UNOWA has continued to strengthen its cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as defined in a joint workplan covering good offices and participation in joint high-level missions (most recently during the January 2007 developments in Guinea); regular meetings between the focal points of both institutions; working group meetings; activities in the field; and cooperation through the UNOWA/ECOWAS/European Union troika framework and the International Contact Groups for the Mano River Basin and on Guinea-Bissau. In the context of its work on integrated strategies for border areas, the Office contributed to the implementation of the ECOWAS initiative on borders as zones of peace and has helped raise awareness on the following four security challenges in West Africa, and the related international response: irregular migration; security threats and illicit trafficking and piracy; the use and effectiveness of sanctions; and the consequences of rapid urbanization.

As highlighted in the recent report on the mid-term review of the work of UNOWA (S/2007/294), efforts aimed at promoting an integrated subregional approach to the complex peace and security challenges facing West Africa require long-term sustained interaction between regional States and institutions and their international partners, including the United Nations system. Much progress has been made but even more remains to be done to build on the momentum and to make the progress irreversible.

In light of the foregoing, I would like to recommend that the mandate of UNOWA, whose functions and activities would be revised as reflected in the document annexed hereto, be extended for a further period of three years, from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2010, subject to a mid-term review to be conducted in 2009.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

Annex

Mandate and functions of the United Nations Office for West Africa from January 2008 to December 2010

I. Mandate

The United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) is entrusted with the overall mandate of enhancing the contribution of the United Nations towards the achievement of peace and security priorities in West Africa.

II. Objectives, functions and activities

In the performance of its mandate, UNOWA will pursue the following objectives and fulfil the functions and related activities as noted below:

Objective 1
Enhance capability within West Africa towards a harmonized subregional approach to peace and security

Function 1.1

Facilitate systematic and regular linkages in the work of the United Nations in the subregion for defining and harmonizing national and subregional policies and strategies, with due regard to specific mandates of United Nations organizations, as well as peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding support offices.

Activities

- Facilitate inter-mission and inter-agency cooperation among United Nations missions in the subregion at the political level (for example, holding quarterly meetings of the heads of peace missions in West Africa); at the military level (regular meetings of United Nations force commanders and military advisers assigned in the subregion); and at the expert level (regular meetings of officers in charge of human rights, humanitarian, security sector reform, economic governance and gender issues).
- Hold regular consultations of heads of United Nations regional agencies for West Africa to develop common strategies.
- Establish and conduct activities of subregional working groups aiming to foster greater interaction among the various planning and response tools being used by the United Nations system.
- Identify and raise awareness on emerging threats to peace and security (i.e. drug trafficking, human trafficking, irregular migration, unattended socio-economic tensions and the impact of natural disasters on the livelihood of people). Particular attention will be given to the Sahelian band and fragile States.
- Identify positive trends and promote activities in consultation with and participation of the private sector, including civil society organizations, to raise awareness of subregional issues and United Nations approaches.

- Reinforce cooperation on cross-cutting issues, including the rule of law, economic issues, human rights and gender issues aimed at mainstreaming them in the deliberations/recommendations of joint initiatives with Governments, civil society, the academic and private sectors, and other partners in the region.
- Make use of UNOWA's leverage, political and strategic network to rally international support to subregional efforts and national commitments to tackle cross-cutting threats to human security and subregional peace.

Function 1.2

Liaise with and assist, as appropriate, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union and other key partners in their promotion of peace and stability in the subregion.

Activities

- Implement and update the joint programme of work developed by UNOWA and the ECOWAS Commission to address selected areas relating to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- Assist the ECOWAS Commission in the implementation of its comprehensive Strategic Conflict Prevention Framework, as well as the ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.
- Implement subregional action plans, strategies and recommendations formulated with/by ECOWAS and other key partners, including the civil society and the private sector.
- Promote awareness of the need to address the protection of children, youth, and women during crises as priority issues in West Africa.
- Strengthen cooperation with the International Contact Group for the Mano River Basin.
- Strengthen cooperation with international partners, including the European Union (within the agreed framework of ECOWAS/European Union/UNOWA cooperation) and the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as regional partners such as civil society organizations and the private sector.

Function 1.3

Perform good offices role in countries of the subregion on conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

Activities

- Identify situations that could generate tension and fuel local, national or cross-border conflicts.
- Carry out good offices functions and special assignments in countries of the subregion, on behalf of the Secretary-General.

- Facilitate the development of an integrated subregional early warning and monitoring system among the United Nations entities and other regional partners active on peace operations in West Africa.

- Promote an integrated subregional approach by supporting and partnering with ECOWAS and other subregional partners in their conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

Objective 2

Enhance efforts towards addressing cross-border issues, including good governance practices and measures; mainstreaming security sector reform into development strategies; formulating a meaningful, effective and integrated subregional approach that encompasses priorities and concerns related to humanitarian, human rights and gender issues; curbing corruption, youth unemployment, rapid urbanization, transitional justice and cross-border illicit activities

Function 2.1

Promote good governance practices and confidence-building measures, including curbing corruption and improving electoral processes.

Activities

- Undertake regular consultations and contribute to the deepening of civic education aimed at strengthening democratic, transparent and accountable governance in the States of the subregion.

- Assist ECOWAS and its member States in their efforts to improve electoral processes through a more robust election-monitoring capacity.

- Follow up on implementation of a subregional approach to the greater involvement of women in peace and security issues, within the framework of the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

- Facilitate the identification of practical ways of curbing or minimizing emerging or potential tensions in specific border areas of West Africa, including through the formulation of integrated border strategies. Assist ECOWAS in the implementation of its initiative on borders as zones of peace.

Function 2.2

Integrated approach to security sector reform as part of economic development strategies.

Activities

- Undertake broad consultations with Governments, and, in particular, security institutions, civil society and development partners on gender, poverty alleviation, human rights and humanitarian mainstreaming in security sector reforms.

- Promote capacity-building of armed and security forces in civic, human rights, humanitarian and gender approaches as part of security sector reforms.

Function 2.3

Develop and promote better knowledge and awareness of subregional problems confronting West Africa.

Activities

- Undertake studies, organize forums and seminars and help develop practical and concerted strategies for addressing current and emerging issues, including the subregional dimensions of youth unemployment, fast growing urbanization, security sector reform, transitional justice, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, drug and human trafficking, piracy and terrorist threats.
- Prepare periodic updates on the subregional impact of conflict situations on sustainable peace and development.
- Develop targeted public information strategies on subregional issues in West Africa, with a focus on human rights and economic governance and their impact on peace and security. These activities would continue to be organized in cooperation with the relevant United Nations entities and partners in the subregion, including key civil society organizations and the private sector.

Function 2.4

Strengthen cooperation with the ECOWAS Commission and with representatives of ECOWAS member States at ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja, focusing on governance and development issues.

Activities

- Assist ECOWAS in the implementation of its new Strategic Vision for Regional Development, adopted at the ECOWAS Heads of State Summit in Abuja on 15 June 2007; as well as its Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons and on the Right of Residence and Establishment.
- Assist ECOWAS in the implementation of its Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, including through regular working group sessions as well as joint programmes and activities.
- Increase the participation of the public sector, civil society (including non-governmental organizations, women's groups, community leaders and traditional elders), the academic community and the private sector in ECOWAS-UNOWA joint initiatives and activities addressing governance issues and challenges.

Objective 3
Carry out additional tasks assigned by the Secretary-General and the Security Council

Function 3.1

Facilitate the implementation of the International Court of Justice ruling of 10 October 2002 on the land and maritime boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria.

Activities

- Assist the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission in the implementation of activities related to its mandate, including the demarcation of the land boundary between the two countries; the civilian observation following the peaceful and orderly transfer of authority in the Lake Chad area, along the land boundary and in the Bakassi peninsula.
- Assist the follow-up committee in monitoring the implementation of the Greentree Agreement (12 June 2006) on the withdrawal and transfer of authority in the Bakassi peninsula.
- Assist the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission in addressing issues related to the needs of the affected populations in border areas and in the Bakassi peninsula.
- Assist the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission to make recommendations on confidence-building measures, such as the development of projects to promote joint economic ventures and cross-border cooperation, and the revitalization of the Lake Chad Basin Commission.